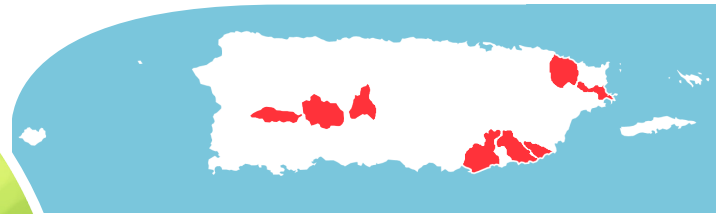


# Puerto Rican Sharp-Shinned Hawk

## *Accipiter striatus venator*



Distribution

### Habitat

The Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk is an endemic species in Puerto Rico, and it is usually found in forested areas associated to the life zones known as subtropical montane rain forests and moist subtropical forests (e.g. cloud forests, Sierran palm, caimitillo-granadillo and tabonuco [candlewood]).

### Diet

This species primarily feeds on small birds such as: the Puerto Rican bullfinch (*Loxigilla portoricensis*), bananaquits (*Coereba flaveola*), and Puerto Rican tanagers (*Nesospingus speculiferus*).

### Distribution

The only five existing populations of the Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk are found in the mountain forests of El Yunque National Forest and the State Forests in: Maricao, Toro Negro, Guilarte and Carite. In 1992, it was estimated that the populations amounted to about 150 individuals, distributed among the territories mentioned. In surveys performed in 2012 and 2013, however, have shown a significant decrease in individuals in the forests.

### Threats

Widespread habitat destruction and modification are the main factors affecting the number and distribution of the Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk. The extremely limited distribution of this species could be the result of the fragmentation of the forested areas which have taken place during this century. This bird has suffered a population decline of about 60% in Carite Forest, and 93% in El Yunque National Forest. The cause of this sharp decline is as yet unknown to scientists.

**Family:** Accipitridae  
**Order:** Falconiformes

## Description

The Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk is a bird of prey that measure approximately 11 to 13 inches (28 to 33 centimeters) in length. Adults are colored slate gray on their backs, and their ventral area has reddish-blond stripes. Juveniles are light brown instead of gray, and their breasts are densely striped. When in flight, this bird demonstrates short wings with rounded corners, and a straight, narrow tail. The Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk flies by alternating between beating its wings and gliding.

## Biological Information

### Reproduction

This bird builds its nest out of twigs, and usually builds them in tree canopies. Females usually lay three white, spotted eggs. Nesting season begins in March, and lasts through July.

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Among the threats impacting this species, scientists have identified: managing practices and harvesting of forest wood, the construction of fences and roads cutting across the forests, the construction of recreational facilities, the increase in use of the forests for recreational purposes, and the possibility of poaching occurring. Parasitic predation by *Philornis* genera flies poses a mortality risk for hatchlings, as identified in the Maricao population. The Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk is also highly susceptible to natural disturbances like strong tropical storms and hurricanes, as these events disturb and modify their environment. However, the main problem the Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk faces is the low density and limited distribution of individuals. This makes the species extremely vulnerable to the loss of even a single individual.

## Conservation Measures

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The Puerto Rican sharp-shinned hawk was included in the Endangered Species list in 1994, and a recovery plan for the species was written in 1997. The prime measure that must be taken to preserve this bird is the protection of the remaining individuals and their habitat. Due to the fact that it can be found in public areas, the implementation of adequate management plans is of paramount importance in order to ensure the survival of this subspecies in Puerto Rican forests.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits the killing, harassing, trapping, purchasing or selling any species, as well as parts and products derived from the species.

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## Additional Information

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